

DURING VIETNAM

I got a letter from Dave Heath,
who was a medic over there.
The envelope was stained with
mud and grass.

I'd beaten the draft and
was in London staying away
from America until it got some
sense.

I took the letter to the Chelsea Potter,
a pub on the King's Road.
Dave had called me from Oakland
when he was about to board the plane
for Vietnam.
He'd asked me if I'd put him up
for awhile in L.A. He wanted to go
back to Brazil. "To hell with this
war," he'd said. I'd told him,
"Sure, as long as you want."

Later that night his father had called
and said that he'd talked Dave out of
going to Brazil. "Maybe I'll regret it,"
he'd said.

In the pub I ordered a pint,
read the letter.
It was all green and brown finger prints.

"Ray, just fell from a chopper into a
rice paddy. Lucky because it blew all
to fucking pieces above me. A lot of
friends. A rocket. All hell broke loose
over here. Dave."

After that I told everyone I was Canadian,
if they asked me how the war was.